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A. Y. Winters

CONCERNING BLAKE

When Blake's mother died,
He got up out of bed
(He was an invalid)
And closed her eyes and smoothed her hair;
And took the pillow from beneath her head,
And drew the sheet across her thin clear face,
And left her there.

The little butler scudded through the gloom—
A frightened cockroach.
Blake cornered him
To give him orders. And he: "At what time did she die?"—
The last word jerked out
With a placating pained grimace.
Great difficulty. His head jerked about
Before Blake in the dusk, febrile, dim.
Blake's small too-fragile body twitched.
His transparent feminine face
Quivered slightly, froze back into place.
His sister's sobs, half checked by the gloom,
Staggered, drunken, down the hall.
This was all.

Then Blake went back into the twilit room
Where the candles struggled vaguely with the dusk.
He drew back the white sheet from the white face.

His bathrobe fell in cerise fold on fold
Above it, fever-blotches on the shadow.
He was tired and weak and cold.
He stared at the clear face as into a mirror,
His features—a curious mirror, Death!—
Frosted and uncertain at his sudden intruding breath.

THE OLD WEEP GENTLY

These old trees
Sigh in every leaf,
Look down their trunks
As if back down the years.
Old knots stay
Where limbs were torn away—
Little fist-rubbed faces
Of gargoyle grief;
While shadows
Slip down the trunks
Like tears.

LITTLE RABBIT

He said: "Let the night
Sweep down with swirling gestures!
The nightwind leaps like a flame!"
  And yet—
The firelight on the wall. . . . .